THE WORLD.

NUMBER LXX.

By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *May* the 2d, 1754.

Ψυχης Ιατρειον

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM.

SIR,

YOUR correſpondent in your ſixty third paper has, I muſt confeſs, ſhewn no leſs ingenuity than the duke de Vivonne did wit in his celebrated anſwer to Lewis the fourteenth, upon that king's aſking him at table, *Mais à quoi ſert de lire? Lá lecture*, ſaid the duke, *fait à l'eſprit ce que vos perdrix font à mes joües.* But whatever new doctrine theſe gentlemen are pleaſed to broach, that BOOKS are the FOOD of the MIND, I muſt beg leave to ſay, that they have from time immemorial been called PHYSIC, not FOOD: and

for

for this I appeal to the famous inſcription on the Alexandrian library, which I have placed at the head of my letter, PHYSIC FOR THE SOUL.

FOR my own part, I can truly ſay that I have conſidered all books as PHYSIC from my earlieſt youth; and ſo indeed have moſt of my ſchool-fellows and acquaintance, and nauſeated them accordingly: nor can any of us at this time endure the ſight or touch of them, not even a preſent from the author, unleſs it be as thoroughly gilt as the moſt loathſome pill, or qualified and made palatable by the ſyrrup of a dedication.

THOSE who have endeavoured to conquer this diſguſt, have given the moſt forcible proofs of the truth of my argument: many of them, by venturing to preſcribe to themſelves, have ſo injudiciouſly taken their potions, that their minds have been thrown into various ill habits and diſorders. Some have fallen into ſo lax a ſtate, that they could neither digeſt nor keep any thing whatſoever. Nay, I have been acquainted with ſuch as have taken the moſt innocent and ſalutary of theſe medicines, but by over-doſing themſelves, and making no allowance for their own corrupt and acrimonious humours, have fallen into the moſt violent agitations, diſcharging ſuch a quantity of undigeſted and virulent matter, that they have poiſoned the neighbourhood round. Some, only upon taking the quantity of a few pages, have ſtared, raved, foamed at the mouth, and diſcovered all the ſymptoms of madneſs; while the very ſame doſe has had the contrary effect upon others, operating only as an opiate.

THE true and genuine FOOD of the MIND is NEWS. That this is inconteſtible, appears from the numbers of ſouls in this metropolis who ſubſiſt entirely upon this diet,

diet, without the leaſt addition of any other nouriſhment whatſoever. In all ages and countries the poets have conſtantly deſcribed the avidity with which it is taken, by the figurative expreſſions of eating or drinking. Shakeſpear uſes a more general term:

With open mouth SWALLOWING *a taylor's* NEWS.

Another witty author calls NEWS the MANNA of the day: alluding to that food with which the Iſraelites were ſupplied in the wilderneſs from day to day, and which in a very little time became ſtale and corrupt: as indeed providence has in it's wiſdom ordained that all kinds of ſuſtenance ſhall be in their nature corruptible, to remind man continually of the dependency of his ſtate on earth. Whereas PHYSIC (particularly of the modern chymical preparation) preſerves it's efficacy and virtues uncorrupted and unimpaired by time; a property it has in common with BOOKS; which never ſuffer by age, provided they are originally well compoſed, and of good ingredients. The principal of theſe ingredients was generally thought to be wit; and I fancy, Mr. Fitz-Adam, by the quantity of it with which you now and then ſeaſon your ſpeculations, that you have adopted that opinion. But let me tell you, ſir, that though my ſuppoſition ſhould be true, you are in the wrong to rely upon it too much: for though this ſeaſoning ſhould happen to preſerve them for the admiration of future times, it is certainly your buſineſs to accomodate yourſelf to the taſte of the preſent. If therefore you would make ſure of cuſtomers, give us NEWS; for which there is as conſtant a demand as for daily bread: and as for your wit, which is a luxury, treat it as the Dutch do their ſpices; burn half of it, and you may poſſibly render the remaining half of ſome value. But if you produce

duce all you have for the market, you will ſoon find it become a mere drug, and bear no price.

I am,

Your friend and well-wiſher,

A. B.

I HAVE publiſhed this letter juſt as I received it: and as a proof that my correſpondent is not ſingular in his opinion of wit, I muſt obſerve that the ſagacious author of the late excellent abridgment of the hiſtory of France expreſſes a doubt, that the preſent age may depreciate wit as the laſt exploded learning. "Prenons garde que "le 18.me ſiecle ne decrie l'eſprit, come le 17.me avoit "decrié l'erudition."

THE ſixteenth century produced the greateſt number of men of the moſt profound erudition: and notwithſtanding thoſe of the ſeventeenth deſpiſed them for their laborious application, it is evident that it was owing to thoſe labours that their ſucceſſors attained their knowledge with ſo much eaſe.

TOWARDS the end of the laſt century, ſome poſſeſſed, and many affected, a pure taſte in literature; and ſetting up for a ſtandard the writings of the ancients, very liberally rewarded thoſe who imitated them the neareſt in chaſtity of compoſition. But no ſooner had monſieur Galland tranſlated the Arabian tales, than the whole French nation ran mad, and would never after read any thing but wretched imitations of their moſt wild extravagances. For it ought to be obſerved that ſome of thoſe original ſtories contain uſeful morals, and well-drawn pictures from common life: and it may be to thoſe ſtories, perhaps, that we owe that ſpecies of writing

ting which is at once ſo entertaining and inſtructive; and in which a very eminent wit, to the honour of this nation, has ſhewn himſelf ſo incomparably ſuperior in drawing natural characters. But theſe were not the parts which had the fortune to pleaſe: the enchantments, the monſters and transformations engaged all their attention; inſomuch that the famous count Hamilton, with a pleaſant indignation at this folly, wrote a tale of wonders, with deſign to ridicule theſe idle books by an aggravated imitation; but with an effect ſo directly contrary to his intention, that, to this day, France is continually producing little pieces of that extravagant turn; while England, that land of liberty, equally indifferent to works of wit, encouraging the licentiouſneſs of the old comedy, can reliſh nothing but perſonal character, or wanton romance. Hence ariſes that ſwarm of memoirs, all filled with abuſe or impurity, which, whatever diſtinctions my preſent correſpondent may make in relation to FOOD and PHYSIC, are the POISON of the MIND.

THE beſt antidote to this poiſon, and the moſt ſalutary in every reſpect, is that ſpecies of writing which may properly be termed REGIMEN; which partaking of the qualities both of PHYSIC and FOOD, at once cleanſes and ſuſtains the patient. Such have I ſtudied to make theſe my papers; which are therefore neither given daily for ſuſtenance, nor occaſionally as medicine, but regularly and weekly as an ALTERATIVE. I have been extremely careful in the compoſition, that there ſhall not be wanting a proper quantity of ſweet, acid and ſalt; yet ſo juſtly proportioned, as not to cloy, ſour, or lacerate the weakeſt ſtomach. The ſucceſs I have met with will be better proved by the atteſtations of my patients,